



Making a Leadership Commitment

Leadership doesn't just happen. As individuals, who choose to undertake a leadership position, we are being given a great responsibility to our cabinet, our community, our peers, but more so, to the people we lead. As leaders, we must continually renew our commitment to leadership, maintaining an attitude of renewal and positive motivations.

No one said leadership is easy, but the rewards are great! In making the commitment to be a role model for our groups, to look positively at the future, to encourage our members to be the best that they can be and then thank them for their efforts, we are fostering not only their development as leaders, but our own, while positively moving our cabinet into the future.

Leadership begins with an internal sense of self-confidence, benevolence and balance that brings forth an authentic leadership presence. This quiet confidence effortlessly engage followers, who will support the leader by offering trust, passion, focus, and a host of other supportive attributes that provide high performance and productivity. Leading any successful organization requires leaders to transform themselves personally.

To get us started on making our own personal leadership commitment, let's review some common leadership commitments:



Ten Leadership Commitments

Clarify personal values.

What do you value? As leaders when we clarify our personal values it becomes easy to see how important it is to walk the walk when you talk the talk.

Set the example by aligning our actions with the values we share as a team.

“What does the team value?”

The commitment that we make, is to not only figure out what we value as individuals, but also to take it a step further and apply that to the team; and then take that one step further and make sure that the way that we act and how we spend our time together, reflects what we value as a group. As leaders, it's especially important for us to set the example, and take the lead in making sure that we are role modeling the behaviors we want to see in others.

Talk about the future in terms of the optimistic possibilities.

By thinking of the possibilities, it creates a positive vision for the future and goals to work towards – moving our cabinet forward, now that is a beautiful thing!

Harness the team's enthusiasm and turn it towards creating common goals in that everyone believes

The key is in the discussions that we have with our groups. It's in the brainstorming and sharing of ideas, and creating an environment that allows all people to fully engage and participate in the process. If everyone can contribute to the process and the product of our teams, we have a greater opportunity for buy-in, and thusly a much higher likelihood of success.

Seek innovative ways to change, grow, and improve “ways of doing.”

How many times have we found ourselves saying, “if it ain't broke, don't fix it?” Or, “we've always done things this way, so why make a change?” It's not about change for change sake, that's not the point. But change for the sake of growth and improving what we do.

Learn from mistakes... sometimes that is a hard thing to do. But in terms of leadership it is essential.

Foster collaboration and build trust among the people with whom we work.

Create an environment where all people feel valued and safe to share a part of themselves. Remember, we DO work together, why not enjoy it, and be successful at it.

Share power with team members.

In delegating to our followers, we empower them to become full, participatory members of our team. We let them know that we value their efforts and that their work product is important. One of the best parts of delegating is that you never know when a simple task may energize a team member and bring out their best! You may have a team member discover a hidden talent even they didn't know existed!

When we work hard, we should play hard too.

First, take the time to celebrate victories – Second, recognize the contributions of our team. Don't get caught up in solely getting the tasks accomplished and forget that an important part of the task should always be to say “we have created something great” and then say, “you've done a great job.”

Strategies for getting enforcing your personal leadership commitment and team involvement:

Clarify your personal credo – the values or principles that you believe should guide your part of the organization. Make sure that you communicate your credo orally and in writing to your key constituents. Post it prominently for everyone to see (e.g., leadership commitment).

Challenge Yourself, Challenge Others

- ⊕ Search out challenging opportunities to change, grow, innovate, and improve.
- ⊕ Experiment, take risks, and learn from the accompanying mistakes.
- ⊕ Reach out to risk takers. Ask them what motivates them. Give them the opportunity to talk about their experiences and share the lessons they've learned.
- ⊕ Enlist others in a common vision by appealing to their values, interests, hopes and dreams.
- ⊕ Turn what you envision for the future into a five- to ten-minute "vision speech" for your team. Keep the written speech in your daily planner. Review it daily, revising and refining, as you feel moved to do so.
- ⊕ Envision yourself ten years from now. Write an article about how you've made a difference in the last decade – how you've contributed to your job, your organization, your family, and your community.
- ⊕ Foster collaboration – promote cooperative goals and building trust.
- ⊕ Delegate area responsibilities – strengthen people by assigning critical tasks and offering visible support.
- ⊕ Find ways to increase interactions among people who need to work more effectively together.
- ⊕ Replace the word "I" with "we." As a leader you can do the job alone; extraordinary things are accomplished as a result of group efforts, not individual efforts. "We" is an inclusive word that signals a commitment to teamwork and sharing. Use it liberally.
- ⊕ Set the example by behaving in ways that are consistent with shared values.
- ⊕ Achieve small "wins" that promote consistent progress and build commitment.
- ⊕ Keep track of how you spend your time. Check to see whether your actions are consistent with your team's values. If you find inconsistency figure out what you need to do to align your actions with the values.
- ⊕ Set goals that are achievable. Tell people what the key milestones are so that they can easily see their progress
- ⊕ Recognize individual contributions to the success of every project.
- ⊕ Celebrate team accomplishments regularly
- ⊕ Tell a public story about a person in your organization who went above and beyond the call of duty.
- ⊕ Say "thank you" when you appreciate something that someone has done.

Ideas taken from Kouzes and Posner – Leadership Challenge and from <http://www.drexel.edu/oca/l/tipsheets/10%20Commitments%20of%20Leadership%20-%20How%20to%20Improve%20Your%20Leadership%20Style.pdf> (November, 2009)